

Fruit Varieties in Ohio, III

Damson Plums

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OHIO
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
Wooster, Ohio

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FRUIT VARIETIES IN OHIO, III

DAMSON PLUMS

J. S. SHOEMAKER

The Ohio Experiment Station in 1912 began a test collection of damson varieties¹, and from year to year others have been added. In this bulletin a description of 24 varieties and an account of their behavior are given.

Altho the demand for plums is limited, the value of damsons should not be overlooked. Their characteristic tart, spicy flavor makes them especially desirable for preserves and for other culinary purposes. The fruit is borne in quantity, is small in size, and somewhat tedious to pick. It can be gathered readily, however, when shaken on canvas or other suitable material spread under the tree. The trees are hardy, vigorous, possess wide adaptability, and are relatively easy to grow. Under neglected conditions black knot is often quite serious, but it has caused little trouble at Wooster.

That there are a number of varieties of damsons is not appreciated by all growers. Any plum that is small, blue, and tart is often called "Damson", much as one would refer to any named variety. Many names are sometimes used confusedly for the same variety or for different varieties, such as Damson, Common Damson, Blue Damson, Common Blue Damson, Black Damson, Purple Damson, Freestone Damson, Sour Damson, Fall Damson, Late Damson.

The fact that damsons come relatively true from seed has led to considerable propagation in this manner. As a result of this method of propagation several distinctly different strains of certain varieties are found. In most of the 24 varieties listed herein, however, there is some character that definitely distinguishes the variety described from others. These differences indicate distinct varieties; but there is always the possibility that some of the trees are not true to name, or are different from those grown under the same name elsewhere. The source from which the trees at Wooster were obtained is given for each variety.

It is rather difficult to form a definite opinion of the merits and demerits of each variety of damson that will apply to conditions in all parts of the State, particularly since a number of varieties

¹Credit is due Paul Thayer, formerly of the Horticultural Department of the Ohio Experiment Station, for obtaining most of the varieties from which the descriptions herein were made.



Fig. 1.—Finch Damson in bloom

mentioned in this bulletin have not been tried in other sections of Ohio. For some purposes certain types of damsons are more desirable than others. In commercial preserving there may be advantages in favor of round or globular fruits with small, plump, free stones that permit the fruit to be pitted readily and cut into fairly small pieces. On the other hand, shape of fruit may be of little concern in damsons for preserving or other culinary purposes in the home. Damsons of sweetish taste are preferred by some, and those of tart, spicy taste by others.

An historical account of damsons, an outline of characters that distinguish *Prunus insititia* (in which damsons are classified) from other species, and a discussion of the subdivision of *Insititia* plums into Damson, Bullace, St. Julien, and Mirabelle groups, are found in the *Plums of New York*, by Hedrick and others². The fruit of the first three groups for the most part is blue in color, while that of the fourth group is golden yellow. On the whole, the Mirabelles are more free stone than the other groups. There is actually little difference between the Damsons, Bullaces, and St. Juliens. Bullaces are often referred to as round in shape, and Damsons as oval. St. Julien is generally thought of as a type of *Prunus insititia* used as stock in nursery work. Early Mirabelle and Langley Bullace are here included with the damsons as representatives of the Mirabelle and Bullace groups. Several of the damson varieties listed in this bulletin and some not mentioned herein have been described by Hedrick *et al.*, Bunyard³, and others, but a number of the varieties have not been discussed in other publications.

BIG MACKEY (*Stark Damson*)

Big Mackey is a very good late-ripening damson. Altho the tree is not as large or as thrifty as Shropshire it is a regular and productive bearer. The fruit is slightly larger than Shropshire.

This variety originated in Pike County, Missouri, and was introduced by Stark Bros., Louisiana, Mo., who are propagating it from a second generation tree. Trees of Big Mackey were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from that source in 1918.

Tree medium size, spreading, dense; shoots pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves below medium size, oval, flat or folded downward; petiole above medium length, heavily pubescent; groove narrow, medium deep, edges slightly rounded; glands on base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations moderately deep. Blooms mid-season. Flowers medium size; pistil fairly short, rather slender;

²Hedrick U P et al The Plums of New York J B Lyon Co 1911

³Bunyard, E A, A Handbook of Hardy Fruits II John Murray London 1915

stigma small; pedicel glabrous, slender, medium length. Fruit slightly above medium size, oval, purplish-black, overlaid with fairly heavy bloom; stem $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, medium stout, pubescent; flesh yellowish green, tender, meaty, juicy, tart; stone small, oval, plump, uniform; ripens late.

BLUE DAMSON

There are several varieties called "Blue Damson". Blue Damson, at Wooster, resembles Shropshire in practically all particulars, and the two seem to be identical or very closely related.

CRITTENDEN DAMSON (*Farleigh, Cluster*)

Crittenden, or Farleigh as it is commonly known, is usually one of the smallest of the damsons, altho in some seasons it attains medium size. It is a regular productive cropper, but the fruit characters do not seem to be very desirable when compared with other varieties.

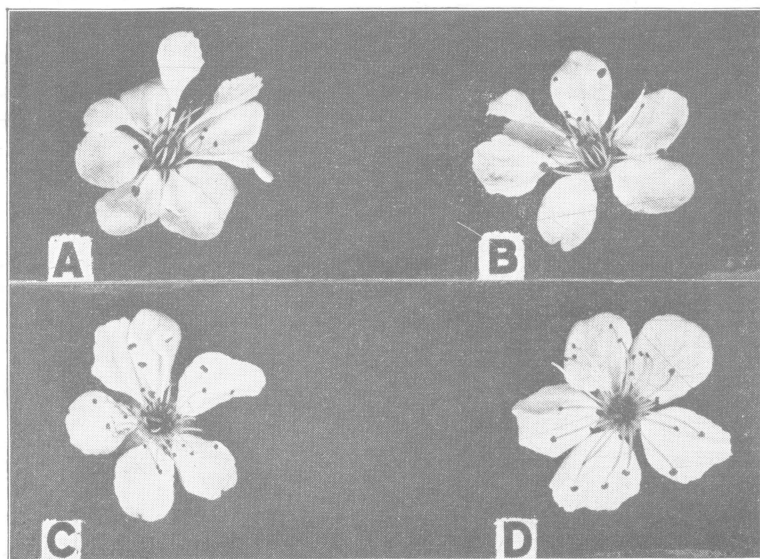


Fig. 2.—Types of blossoms

Note additional petals in A, King; B, Crittenden; C, Scioto; and normal number of five in French, D

It was introduced about 1820 in England, and is a chance seedling found by a Mr. Crittenden, Farleigh, Kent, England. The trees at Wooster were obtained from Samuel Fraser, Geneseo, New York, in 1914.

Tree medium size, spreading, open-topped, thrifty, healthy, hardy; shoots moderately pubescent, slender, greenish to light red color; branches thorny and spiny; bark of trunk with fairly deep vertical fissures. Leaves folded upward, oval, long, narrow; petiole medium length, pubescent; groove deep, narrow, edges slightly rounded; glands usually at base of leaf, one sometimes on petiole; margin considerably waved, serrations markedly coarse, deep; tip leaves dark red. Blooms midseason; flowers large; petals often more than five or doubled; pistil medium length, fairly stout; stigma large; pedicel glabrous, short, stout. Fruit small, elliptical, prominently necked, bluish-black overlaid with heavy bloom; stem short, slender, smooth, ringed, strongly adherent, set in narrow, shallow cavity; dots very small, inconspicuous; flesh greenish yellow, firm, moderately juicy, tart; stone clinging, medium size, ovate, smooth; ripens midseason.

DECKS DAMSON

It may be said in favor of Decks Damson that the fruit is attractive in appearance, is of an agreeably tart flavor, ripens before Shropshire or French, and is regularly productive. The fruit, however, cracks and drops quite easily and the tree is only moderately thrifty.

Decks Damson was introduced quite a number of years ago by Wild Bros., Sarcoxie, Missouri, as an improved strain of damson. The trees at the Ohio Experiment Station were obtained from this nursery in 1914.

Tree medium size, roundish, spreading, bears young, hardy; lenticels conspicuous, scattered; shoots lightly pubescent or glabrous; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves broadly oval, flat or folded upward; petiole $\frac{7}{8}$ inch long, heavily pubescent, slightly tinged with red; groove narrow. Blooms early midseason. Flowers large; pistil medium long, fairly stout; stigma large; pedicel glabrous, below medium length, stout, often tinged with red. Fruit 1 inch in diameter, roundish, bluish-black, overlaid with heavy bloom, suture an obscure line, deepening at cavity; dots numerous, small, russeted, inconspicuous; stem $\frac{5}{8}$ inch long, medium thick, lightly pubescent, tinged with red, set in extremely shallow cavity; skin thin, tender, separating readily; flesh golden yellow, meaty, juicy, tender, agreeably tart; stone clinging, $\frac{3}{8}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, oval, plump; ripens midseason.

EARLY MIRABELLE

Fruits of varieties of the Mirabelle group are mostly of high quality and golden yellow color. It is probable that the name of the group is derived from the French word *mirable*, meaning wonderful.

Early Mirabelle is a small, yellow, free-stone variety of excellent quality. The tree is not as productive as could be desired. The fruit drops easily.

It is probably of English origin. Trees of this variety were obtained from J. C. Allgrove, Langley, near Slough, England, in 1921.

Tree small, round topped, hard; shoots heavily pubescent, twiggy, slender; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves medium size, roundish, coarse texture; petiole medium length, pubescent; groove narrow, rather shallow, edges rounded; glands on base of leaf blade; margin slightly waved, serrations shallow. Blooms early midseason. Flowers small, tinged with yellow. Fruit small, roundish-oval, yellow, faintly tinged with red on sunny side, light bloom, attractive, suture indistinct; stem $\frac{3}{8}$ inch long, slightly ringed, markedly pubescent; dots reddish; flesh yellowish, sweet, moderately juicy, pleasant; stone small, brownish, plump, roundish, free; ripens early.

FINCH DAMSON

Finch is a very good damson variety ripening in early midseason. There is a good local demand for it at Wooster and it finds some favor with hucksters who truck to neighboring cities. It is sweet in taste. The fruit is only of medium size but is borne abundantly. There is little fault to be found with the habit of growth or productiveness of the tree. Trees of Finch Damson were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station in 1914 from E. H. Finch, Amesville, Ohio.

Tree large, vigorous, spreading, dense topped, hardy; branches numerous, slightly spinescent; lenticels few, small; shoots light greenish red, lightly pubescent; trunk with fairly deep vertical fissures. Leaves medium size, oval, flat, often folded downward; petiole $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, lightly pubescent; groove wide, edges slightly rounded; margin slightly waved, serrations fine, sharp; tip leaves dark red. Blooms relatively late. Flowers large; petal margin finely and considerably waved; pistil long, medium stout; stigma large; pedicel long, medium stout, glabrous. Fruit medium size, oval, trace of neck, purplish-black, overlaid with heavy bloom,

suture a line; stem $\frac{5}{8}$ inch long, slender, lightly pubescent, adhering, slightly ringed; skin tough, separating readily; dots inconspicuous; flesh yellowish, meaty, juicy, sweet, fibrous; stone almost free when fully ripe, clings slightly along one side, clings unless mature, small, oval, uniform; quality good, sweet; ripens early mid-season.

FREE DAMSON

Free Damson ranks as a mediocre variety in the orchards of the Ohio Experiment Station. The fruit is only fair in quality. From the name of the variety it would be expected that the stone would be free but in fact it clings unless the fruit is quite fully ripe. The tree is inclined to bear light crops.

It was introduced by Stark Bros., Louisiana, Missouri, about 1889, and trees were obtained from this nursery in 1914.

Tree medium size, upright-spreading, open topped, hardy; branches thorny; shoots pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves flat or folded upward, oval; petiole moderately pubescent, medium length; glands on base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations moderately deep. Blooms late. Flowers medium size; pistil short, medium slender; stigma rather small; pedicel glabrous or almost so, medium length. Fruit medium size, oval, purplish-black, overlaid with fairly heavy bloom; stem pubescent, short, inserted in shallow cavity; flesh greenish-yellow, juicy, tender, sweet when ripe; quality only fair; stone clinging unless fully ripe, oval, fairly large, plump, uniform, often with reddish streaks, surfaces roughened; ripens late midseason.

FRENCH DAMSON

As grown in the Ohio Experiment Station orchards French Damson is superior to Shropshire in size, appearance, and quality of fruit; but inferior to it in thriftiness of tree.

The origin of French Damson is unknown. It has probably been in existence a very long time, and is possibly a hybrid of *Prunus insititia* and *Prunus domestica*. Trees were obtained from Samuel Fraser, Geneseo, New York, in 1914.

Tree medium to large size, spreading-upright, moderately thrifty, hardy; shoots pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves medium size, oval, narrow, medium coarse texture; petiole heavily pubescent, medium length, rather slender; groove moderately deep, narrow, edges rounded; glands on base of blade of leaf; tip leaves dark red; margin considerably waved, serrations deep, sharp,

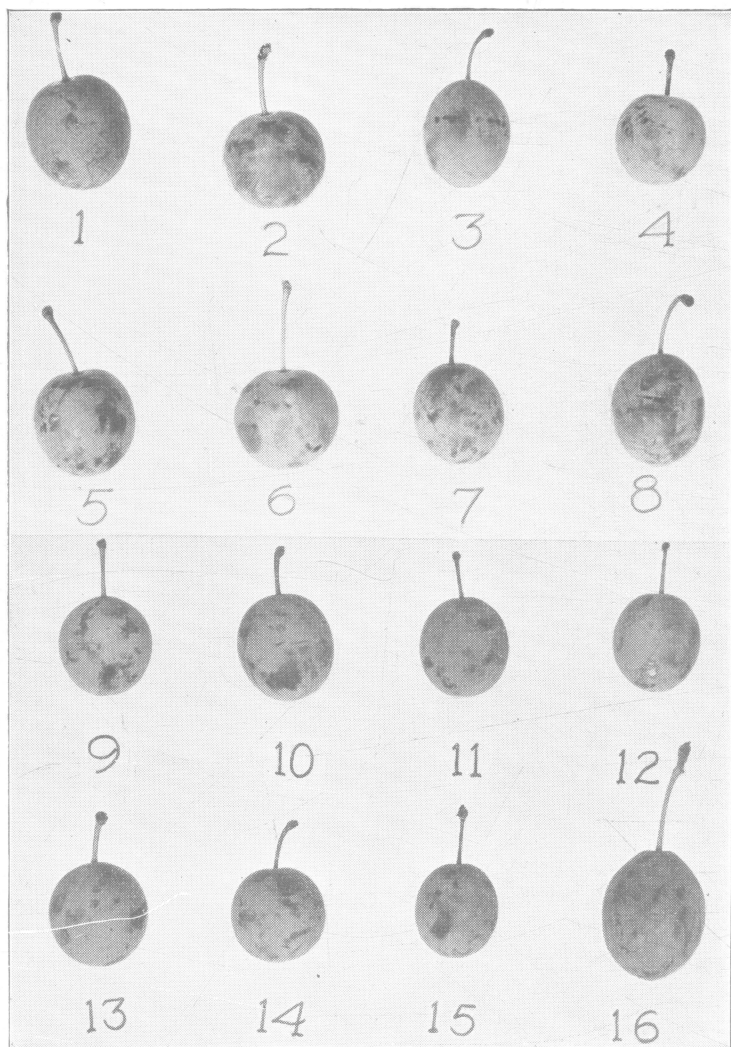


Fig. 3.—Damson fruits (Reduced more than Figure 4)

- 1 French, 2 Decks, 3 Scioto, 4 Sweet Damson, 5 Frogmore, 6 Kelso,
7 Blue Damson, 8 Mount Logan, 9 Pringle, 10 Big Mackey,
11 Free Damson, 12 Stark Free Damson, 13 Finch,
14 Riley, 15 Shropshire, 16 Merryweather

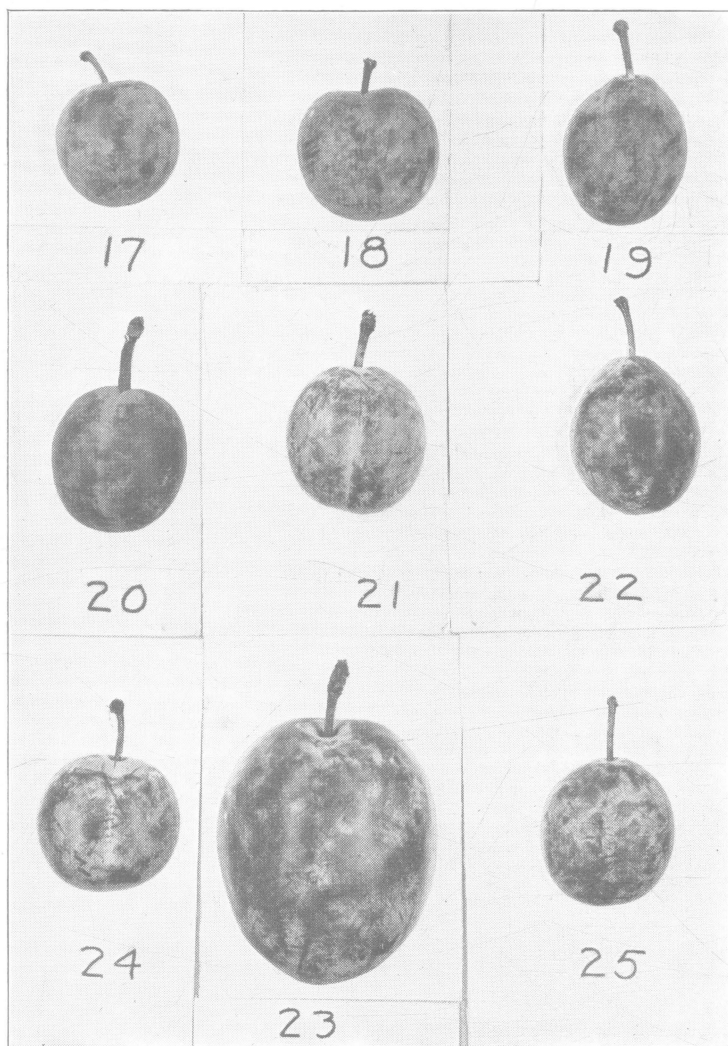


Fig. 4.—Damson fruits

17 Early Miraebble, 18 Rivers Early, 19 King, 20 Langley Bullace,
21 White Damson, 22 Crittenden, 23 Prune Damson,
24 Musselman, 25 Majestic

coarse. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; petals often more than 5 or doubled; pistil long, slender; stigma rather small; pedicel glabrous, stout, less than medium length. Fruit fairly large, roundish-oval, slightly flattened at stem end, suture indistinct, bronzed-purple color, rather light bloom; stem $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, slender, pubescent, inserted in shallow cavity, slightly ringed; flesh greenish-yellow, juicy, fibrous; stone above medium size, clinging; ripens late.

FROGMORE DAMSON

Frogmore Damson, altho planted some six years ago, has not shown any outstanding merits. The quality of the fruit is only fair, and is somewhat lacking in desirable damson flavor. The tree is only moderately thrifty, and may be limited in adaptation.

It originated about 1870, at the Royal Gardens, Frogmore, England. Trees were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from J. C. Allgrove, Langley, near Slough, England, in 1921.

Tree rather small, spreading; branches moderately thorny; shoots glabrous, or almost so, shiny; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves above medium size, often folded backward, oval, long, coarse texture; petiole medium length, quite thick, moderately pubescent; groove wide, fairly deep, edges slightly rounded; glands at base of leaf; margin considerably waved, serrations markedly coarse, deep; tip leaves dark red. Flowers large; pistil medium length, medium stout; stigma large; pedicel short, stout, glabrous. Fruit above medium size, roundish oval, bluish-black; stem fairly long, medium stout, glabrous, ringed, inserted in fairly deep cavity; flesh greenish yellow, firm, meaty, sweet; stone clinging, small oval, uniform; ripens midseason.

KELSO DAMSON

The tree of Kelso Damson bears very early, but is somewhat irregularly productive when mature. There are some indications from other parts of the State that the tree of Kelso is not very long lived. The fruit has a pleasant tart flavor, and is very good for preserves. Because of its early season of ripening, Kelso Damson seems to be worthy of attention by growers who desire a damson variety to ripen somewhat in advance of French Damson or Shropshire Damson, but it is not as good a variety as these two. Like other damsons of its season the fruit cracks easily.

This variety probably originated in Clinton County, Ohio. Reports of its history are somewhat confusing. There is a story

that a tramp passing thru the neighborhood gave a man by the name of Kelso a seed, saying that it was a good variety, but this may not refer to Kelso Damson. There is also said to be a yellow variety called Kelso which originated at Sabina, Ohio. Buds of Kelso Damson were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from Jas. L. Henderson, Cedarville, Ohio, and trees from A. L. Milner, Leesburg, Ohio, in 1915.

Tree medium size, upright, spreading, dense; shoots lightly pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves medium size, flat or folded upward, obovate-oval, base often heart-shaped; petiole $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, lightly pubescent; margin somewhat waved, serrations coarse, broad, relatively sharp pointed; groove narrow, medium deep, slightly rounded; glands on base of leaf. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; pistil long, fairly stout; stigma large; pedicel glabrous, or nearly so, long, slender. Fruit medium size, nearly round, stem end flattened, bluish-black, heavy bloom, suture indistinct or a slight depression; stem $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, slender, very lightly pubescent, set in shallow, wide cavity, slightly ringed; flesh greenish to golden yellow, meaty, firm, somewhat fibrous, fairly juicy, pleasantly tart, sweet when ripe; quite subject to cracking; skin thin, tough; stone small, plump, semi-clinging, surface conspicuously pitted, sharp tip; ripens early midseason.

KING DAMSON (*King of the Damsons, Bradley*)

King Damson is a variety with fruit of large damson size; larger than that of Shropshire or French. The tree bears young, is a regular cropper, but is of only medium size. Fruit ripens late. King Damson originated with a Mr. Bradley, in England. Trees were obtained from J. C. Allgrove, Langley, near Slough, England, in 1921.

Tree moderate size, round-headed, hardy; shoots glabrous to lightly pubescent; branches somewhat thorny; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves above medium size, flat or folded upward, coarse texture, long oval; petiole medium length, medium thick, moderately pubescent; groove narrow, medium deep, edges rounded; glands often on petiole; margin considerably waved, serrations coarse, relatively deep. Blooms midseason. Flowers medium size; petals often more than 5 or doubled; pistil below medium length, set in fairly deep depression; stigma medium size; pedicel short, stout, glabrous. Fruit large-damson size, oval, slightly necked, purplish-black, overspread with heavy bloom; suture a line; stem $\frac{1}{2}$ inch

long, smooth, slightly ringed, inserted in deep, narrow cavity; flesh greenish-yellow, firm, meaty, juicy, pleasantly tart; stone semi-clinging, oval, uniform, slightly pointed.

LANGLEY BULLACE

The tree of Langley Bullace is very straggly. It bears while young and is regular but not heavy in production. The fruit ripens late, is considerably above medium size, and of fairly good quality for culinary purposes.

This variety was introduced in 1902 by Messrs. Veitch, England. It is probably the result of a cross between Crittenden Damson and Early Orleans. Trees were obtained from J. C. Allgrove, Langley, near Slough, England, in 1921.

Tree rather small, spreading, open; shoots glabrous or almost so. Leaves small, folded upward, midrib reflexed, oval, coarse texture; petiole quite short, medium pubescent; groove wide, edges rather thin; glands on base of leaf; margin rather finely serrate. Blooms midseason. Fruit above medium size, oval, bluish-black, overspread with light bloom; suture indistinct, wide; stem 1 inch long, stout, smooth or lightly pubescent, slightly ringed; flesh greenish-yellow, firm, medium juicy, fairly good quality; stone clinging, above medium size, oval, not plump; ripens late.

MAJESTIC DAMSON

The large habit of tree growth, regular productiveness, and above medium size of fruit make Majestic Damson better than the average damson variety. Altho it is a good variety, it is not sufficiently outstanding to warrant replacing better-known varieties.

Majestic Damson originated previous to 1904 as a seedling near the Stone & Wellington Nurseries, Fonthill, Ontario, Canada. Trees were obtained from this nursery in 1914.

Tree large, upright-spreading, hardy, vigorous; branches numerous, roughened, somewhat spiny and thorny; lenticels small numerous; shoots heavily pubescent; trunk with fairly deep vertical fissures. Leaves flattened or folded downward, ovate-oval; petiole $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, moderately pubescent, tinged with red; groove narrow, shallow, rounded; glands on base of leaf; serrations moderately deep. Blooms midseason. Flowers medium size; pistil medium to below in length, slender; stigma small; pedicel glabrous, medium length, slender. Fruit above medium size, oval, trace of neck,

purplish-black, overlaid with heavy bloom; dots inconspicuous; stem medium, ringed; flesh golden yellow, juicy, melting, fibrous, agreeably tart; stone semi-cling to cling, conspicuously pitted; ripens late midseason.

MERRYWEATHER DAMSON

The regularity of bearing and productiveness of Merryweather Damson are commendable. The characteristic tart flavor of damsons is maintained in fruit that is considerably larger in size than most damson varieties. The fruit is excellent for preserves and for stewing. The tree is easily distinguished from other damsons by its low, spreading habit of growth.

It was grown by Merryweather & Sons, Southwell, Notts, England; introduced in 1907, and in that year received an award of merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. Trees of Merryweather were obtained from Coates Nursery, Morganhill, California, in 1917.

Tree small, low-growing, spreading, hardy; lenticels conspicuous, scattered; shoots heavily pubescent, stout; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves quite large, often folded backward, long oval; petiole long, thick, heavily pubescent; groove medium width and depth; glands on base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations moderately deep. Blooms midseason. Flowers above medium size; pistil long, slender; stigma small; pedicel heavily pubescent, medium length and stoutness. Fruit large, suture a distinct line, bluish-black, overlaid with heavy bloom; stem $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, thick, tenacious, set in medium deep cavity, heavily pubescent; dots stellate, russetted, scattered; skin thick, tough; flesh greenish-yellow with a somewhat whitish caste, firm, juicy, tender, tart; stone large, pitted, semi-clinging; ripens late midseason.

MOUNT LOGAN

Mount Logan, at Wooster, is an inferior variety of damson. The tree has an undesirable narrow, upright habit of growth and has been irregular and low in productiveness. The fruit is rather small and only fair in quality. Mount Logan and Scioto in the orchards of the Ohio Experiment Station are much alike, altho there are some slight differences in tree and fruit characters. Trees of Mount Logan were obtained from E. McBeth, Kingston, Ohio, in 1915.

Tree medium size, narrow, upright, somewhat spiny and thorny; shoots glabrous, slender; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves

medium size, ovate; petiole rather short, lightly pubescent; groove shallow, edges slightly rounded; serrations rather shallow; tip leaves dark red. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; petal margin almost entire; pistil long, medium stout; stigma medium size; pedicel glabrous, medium long, slender. Fruit medium or slightly below in size, oval, somewhat flattened, trace of neck; stem medium length, glabrous to lightly pubescent, slightly ringed, inserted in shallow cavity; flesh greenish-yellow, often slightly tinged with red, meaty, sweet when fully ripe; stone semi-cling, oval, not uniform, medium size, often with red streaks; ripens late.

MUSSELMAN DAMSON

Musselman and Scioto are said to be identical (Page 19), but the trees and fruit of these two varieties at Wooster are not alike. The trees of Musselman are considerably more spreading in habit than those of Scioto, and the fruit is roundish in contrast to the elliptical shape of the Scioto. At Wooster, Musselman is superior type to Scioto. It is possible that Musselman in the orchards of the Ohio Experiment Station is the Scioto Damson which has been held in high esteem in Ross County. There is some reason to believe that propagation of Musselman or Scioto from seedlings has led to marked differences of forms under these names.

The origin of the Musselman Damson is referred to later, under Scioto Damson. Trees of Musselman were obtained from E. McBeth, Kingston, Ohio, in 1915.

Tree medium to large, upright-spreading, vigorous, reasonably hardy; branches moderately spiny and thorny; shoots glabrous; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves medium size, broadly oval; petiole rather short, moderately pubescent; groove fairly wide, deep, edges slightly rounded; glands on base of leaf; margin only slightly waved, serrations rather shallow. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; pistil long; pedicel long, slender, glabrous. Fruit roundish, medium size, purplish-black, overlaid with medium heavy bloom; dots few; stem slender, smooth, slightly ringed, set in small shallow cavity; flesh greenish-yellow, meaty, juicy, tart; stone semi-clinging, roundish-oval, plump; ripens late midseason.

PRINGLE DAMSON

Pringle Damson is the latest damson variety to ripen at Wooster. This may be an advantage or disadvantage according to the location and market. At Wooster, it ranks as only a mediocre dam-

son variety. As a rule the fruit is small, distinctly sour, and unattractive in appearance. The tree of Pringle Damson is moderately productive.

The variety is said to have originated with A. C. Pringle, Mears, Michigan. It was disseminated by E. Hawley & Sons, Hart, Michigan about 1896. Trees were obtained from G. A. Hawley, Hart, Michigan in 1914.

Tree large, spreading-upright; shoots slender, lightly pubescent; lenticels on branches fairly large, conspicuous, scattered; trunk relatively smooth; leaves folded upward, oval; petiole $\frac{3}{8}$ inch long, heavily pubescent, medium thick, tinged with red; groove medium deep, narrow, edges rounded; glands on base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations moderately deep. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; pistil long, fairly stout; stigma large; pedicel glabrous, above medium length, stout. Fruit small, roundish-oval, dull black, overlaid with heavy bloom, suture shallow, indistinct; stem $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, lightly pubescent, adhering strongly, inserted in shallow cavity, ringed; dots inconspicuous; skin thin, tough, tenacious, astringent; flesh golden yellow, netted with whitish veins, juicy, only moderately meaty, sprightly, sour; stone clinging, rather large, oval, pitted; ripens very late.

PRUNE DAMSON⁴

In practically all tree and fruit characters Prune Damson resembles the species *Prunus domestica* more than that of *Prunus insititia*. The fruit is as large as or larger than German Prune. The tree and foliage are more of the prune than damson type. There may possibly be some slight indication of damson quality in Prune Damson, but it is much less characterized than in varieties with smaller-sized fruits.

Buds of Prune Damson were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station in 1915, from U. T. Cox, Proctorville, Ohio. Trees were planted in 1918. The variety is said to be a cross between a prune and a damson.

Tree medium size, spreading, rather low-growing; shoots stout, heavily pubescent; trunk with fairly deep vertical fissures. Leaves often folded downward, very large, $1\frac{3}{4}$ by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, oval; petiole $\frac{5}{8}$ inch long, heavily pubescent; groove moderately deep, wide, edges slightly rounded; glands on base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations shallow. Blooms midseason. Flowers very large; pistil

⁴Shropshire Damson is also called Prune Damson and probably has the prior right to this name.

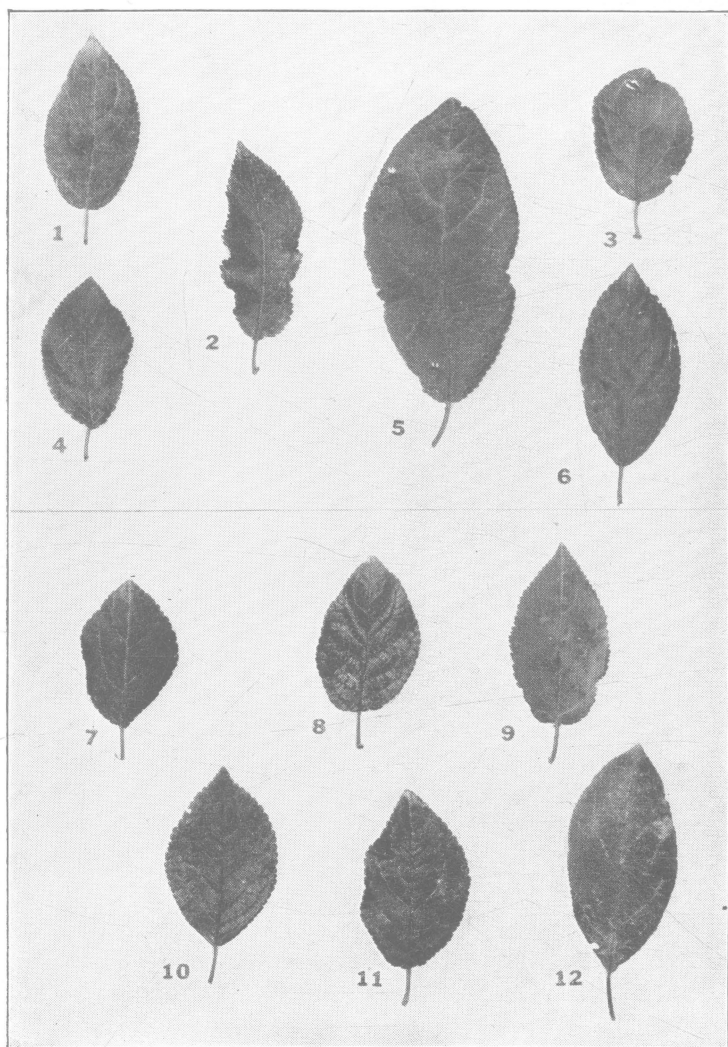


Fig. 5.—Damson leaves

1 Shropshire, 2 French, 3 Rivers Early, 4 Pringle, 5 Merryweather
6 Blue Damson, 7 Decks, 8 Majestic, 9 Scioto, 10 Sweet
Damson, 11 Kelso, 12 Prune Damson

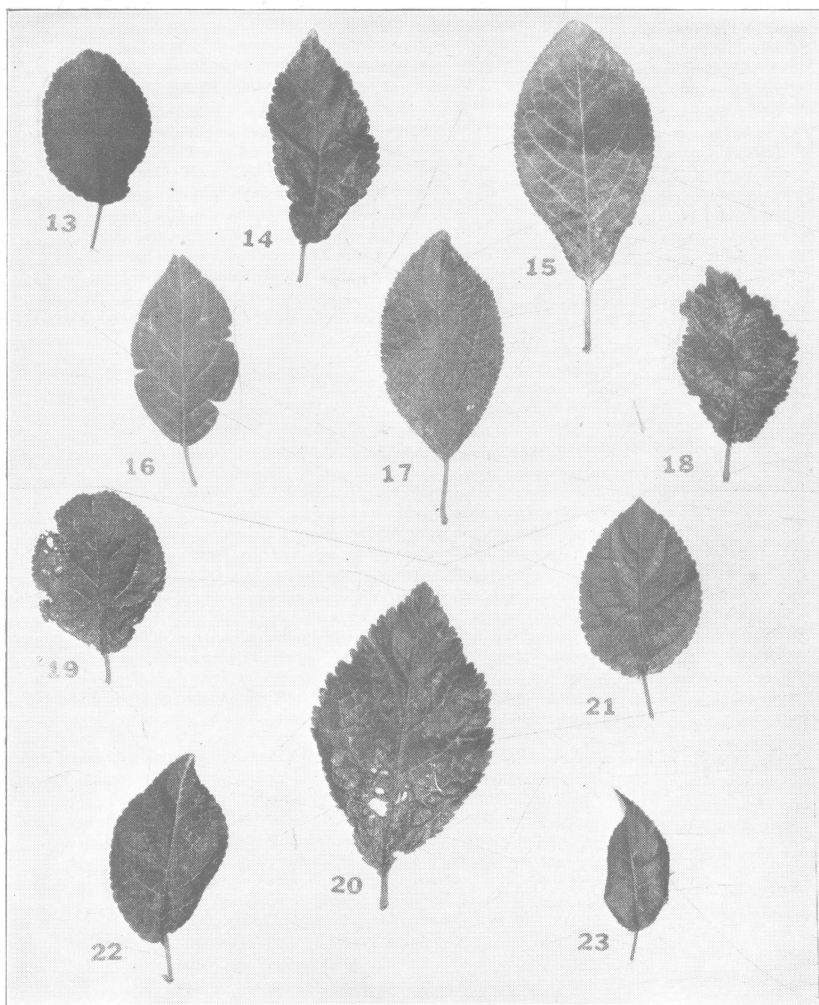


Fig. 6.—Damson leaves

13 White Damson, 14 Crittenden, 15 Riley, 16 Big Mackey,
17 Finch, 18 King, 19 Early Mirabelle, 20 Frogmore,
21 Mount Logan, 22 Musselman, 23 Mirabelle

very long, slender; stigma small; pedicel pubescent, long, medium stout. Fruit large, $1\frac{3}{4}$ by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches, oval, trace of neck, halves unequal, swollen on suture side, suture prominent; dots small, numerous, brownish; skin thin, tough; stem $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, heavily pubescent, medium stout, inserted in deep cavity; flesh yellowish, juicy, fibrous, meaty, sweet, pleasant; stone $1\frac{1}{8}$ by $\frac{9}{16}$ inch, very large, oval, clinging, nearly free when fully ripe; and ripens midseason.

RILEY DAMSON

Riley Damson ripens slightly earlier than Shropshire or French. The tree is healthy and productive. The fruit is roundish and makes very good preserves.

It was named in 1901 by McNary and Gaines, Xenia, Ohio, in honor of J. N. Riley, Washington C. H., Ohio, on whose grounds it was discovered as a chance seedling. Trees of Riley Damson were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from the Fayette Nursery, Washington C. H., Ohio, in 1915.

Tree large, spreading, vigorous, hardy; shoots lightly pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves flat or folded upward, obovate-oval; petiole moderately pubescent, medium length; groove fairly wide, deep, edges slightly rounded; glands often on petiole; margin slightly waved, serrations fine, shallow. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; pistil long; pedicel long, slender, glabrous. Fruit 1 inch diameter, roundish, purplish-black, overlaid with heavy bloom, suture a line; stem medium length, glabrous or nearly so, slender, slightly ringed, set in medium deep cavity; dots inconspicuous; skin thick, tough, slightly astringent, subject to cracking; flesh greenish-yellow, firm, slightly dry, meaty, medium good flavor; stone semi-clinging, oval, plump, short, uniform; ripens late midseason.

RIVERS EARLY

Rivers Early is the earliest ripening damson in the orchards of the Ohio Experiment Station. The tree bears while quite young and is moderately productive when mature. It is only moderately thrifty. The fruit sometimes colors well several weeks before ripe. Unfortunately the fruit is very susceptible to cracking and dropping. The fruit is rather sweet and does not possess much of the characteristic damson flavor. Rivers Early finds a ready market at Wooster and in neighboring cities, its blue color giving it preference over many red varieties ripening at the same season.

It is a seedling of the St. Etienne plum, raised by Mr. Rivers, Sawbridgeworth, England. Trees were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from J. C. Allgrove, Langley, near Slough, England, in 1921.

Tree small, round topped, hardy; shoots lightly pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves flat, small to medium size, roundish oval, medium coarse texture; petiole lightly pubescent, rather slender; groove narrow, deep, edges slightly rounded; glands on base of leaf blade; margin very slightly waved, serrations shallow. Fruit medium size, roundish, flattened at stem end, purplish-black, overlaid with fairly heavy bloom, suture shallow becoming fairly deep at cavity; stem short, inserted in rather deep cavity, glabrous or nearly so; flesh yellowish-green, fibrous, juicy, sweetish, somewhat lacking in tartness; drops easily, susceptible to cracking; stone semi-cling, oval, pointed, medium size; ripens early.

SCIOTO DAMSON

Scioto Damson, as it grows at Wooster, is an inferior variety of damson. The tree is distinctly upright in habit of growth and is difficult to train to a spreading form. It is low and irregular in productiveness. The fruit is rather small and only fair in quality.

The following account of its origin and history is found in the U. S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook, 1905: "This variety has been grown at Chillicothe, Ohio, formerly a noted damson district, for nearly 75 years, generally under the name 'Musselman' but sometimes as 'Chicksaw', the name commonly applied to the native species *Prunus angustifolia*. It was brought to Chillicothe by Miss Palace Hill in 1831, in the form of young trees, from Petersburg, Va. These trees were from the nursery of her brother, Mr. Joseph C. Hill, who started a nursery on Halifax street, in that city, in 1820. The variety had been found by him on the farm of his brother, Mr. Thomas Hill, near Bollings Bridge, North Carolina, on the Roanoke River. It has been gratuitously disseminated under the name 'Scioto' by Mr. William B. Mills, Chillicothe, Ohio". The trees at the Ohio Experiment Station were obtained from Mr. Mills in 1915 and 1916.

Tree distinctly upright, narrow, spiny and thorny, semi-hardy; shoots glabrous, slender, light colored, shiny; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves flat or folded downward, ovate; petiole lightly pubescent, distinctly red, slender; groove shallow, medium wide, edges rounded; glands on base of leaf, often on petiole, frequently

stalked; margin waved, serrations rather sharp. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; petals often more than 5 or doubled; pistil long, slender; stigma medium size; pedicel long, slender, glabrous. Fruit rather small, elliptical, trace of neck, suture very shallow, purplish-black, overlaid with medium heavy bloom; dots fairly large, brownish; skin thick, rather free from astringency; stem medium length, often very short, slender, glabrous, slightly ringed, inserted in shallow cavity; flesh greenish-yellow, meaty, juicy; quality only fair; stone semi-free to cling, often with circular streaks of red, distinct fin-like projection along one side, oval, plump; ripens late midseason.

SHROPSHIRE DAMSON (*Prune Damson*)

Shropshire is easily the most widely grown damson variety. Nurserymen offering damson trees for sale usually list Shropshire and quite often mention no other. In comparison with other damson varieties at Wooster, Shropshire, altho somewhat irregularly productive is surpassed by few or none in tree habits. It is excelled, however, by several damsons in quality, size, and appearance of fruit, but is not discounted greatly in these respects. A number of growers in the State are replacing Shropshire with French Damson.

Shropshire originated in England in the 17th Century. Trees were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from J. B. Morey, Danville, New York, in 1912, and from Stark Bros., Louisiana, Mo., in 1915.

Tree large, spreading, upright, vigorous, hardy; shoots pubescent; bark of trunk with fairly deep vertical fissures. Leaves flat, often folded backward, oval, medium size; petiole moderately pubescent, medium length, medium stout; groove medium deep, narrow, rounded; glands on base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations moderately coarse and sharp. Blooms late midseason. Flowers medium size; pistil medium length, slender; stigma small; pedicel medium length, slender, glabrous. Fruit medium size, oval, slightly necked, bluish-black, overspread with heavy bloom, suture indistinct; stem short, slender, pubescent, inserted in a shallow cavity, slightly ringed; flesh greenish-yellow, meaty, fibrous, tart, juicy; stone clinging, medium size, oval, pointed; ripens late.

SWEET DAMSON

It is probable that many growers have a number of sweet damsons that are not the same as the one herein described, and because of the sweet taste of the fruit term each by the name "Sweet Damson". Sweet Damson at Wooster is a very good mid-season variety. It resembles Finch Damson more than it does any other damson variety in the orchards of the Ohio Experiment Station, but the two are not identical. For example, Sweet Damson has heavily pubescent shoots in contrast to the lightly pubescent shoots of Finch Damson. As the name implies, the fruit is sweet in taste. The fruit is somewhat lacking in tartness characteristic of varieties like Shropshire and French. While a good degree of tartness is preferred by many, varieties of sweet taste are not discounted by most purchasers. The tree for the most part seems to be free from serious faults. The tree is vigorous, large in size, and of an upright-spreading habit. Sweet Damson, in the years of testing, has been a regularly productive bearer. Trees obtained from J. Van Lindley, Pomona, North Carolina, 1916.

Tree large, vigorous, upright-spreading, rather dense topped, somewhat thorny, hardy; shoots heavily pubescent; trunk with fairly deep vertical fissures. Leaves flat or folded upward, obovate-oval; petiole pubescent, above medium length, only medium thick; groove wide, medium deep, edges slightly rounded; glands on base of leaf; margin somewhat waved and folded, serrations coarse, fairly deep; tip leaves yellowish- to light-red. Blooms midseason. Flowers large; pistil medium long, fairly stout; stigma large; pedicel glabrous, short, stout. Fruit medium size, oval, bluish-black, covered with heavy bloom, suture a line; stem $\frac{5}{8}$ inch long, set in fairly deep, medium wide cavity; flesh greenish-yellow, juicy, melting, sweet when ripe; stone rather small, elliptical, uniform, plump, clinging, almost free in well ripened specimens; ripens mid-season.

WHITE DAMSON (*Shailers White Damson*)

The fruit of White Damson is unattractive in appearance because of its mottled greenish-yellow color. It is said to be an old variety known in Europe in 1629. Trees were obtained by the Ohio Experiment Station from the Leonard Coates Nursery, Morganhill, California, in 1917 and 1920.

Tree medium size, upright, thrifty, mediocre in productiveness; shoots slender, heavily pubescent; trunk relatively smooth. Leaves

medium size, flat or folded upward, roundish-oval; petiole heavily pubescent, long; groove wide, moderately deep, edges slightly rounded; glands at base of leaf; margin uniform, serrations fairly deep and coarse. Flowers large; pistil short to medium, stout; stigma large; pedicel short, stout, lightly pubescent. Fruit medium size, roundish oval, greenish-yellow, overlaid with fairly heavy bloom, unattractive; scattering red dots; stem medium length, stout, pubescent, set in shallow cavity; flesh yellowish, sweet, firm; stone clinging, oval, pointed; ripens midseason.

SEASON OF RIPENING

The season of ripening was given in the description for each variety. For convenience, the varieties are classified here into groups according to season.

Early: Rivers Early, Early Mirabelle.

Early midseason: Finch, Kelso.

Midseason: Decks, Sweet Damson, Frogmore, White Damson, Crittenden.

Late midseason: Free Damson, Majestic, Merryweather, Musselman.

Late: Big Mackey, King, Riley, Shropshire, French, Scioto, Mount Logan, Langley Bullace.

Very late: Pringle.

RANK OF VARIETIES

It is not an easy task to rank damsons in order of merit, and any such attempt is bound to be open to just criticism. An effort is made, however, to group the damson varieties into four classes.

Very good varieties: French, Shropshire, Big Mackey, Finch, Sweet Damson.

Good varieties: Merryweather, Decks, Kelso, King, Majestic, Musselman, Riley.

Mediocre varieties: Early Mirabelle, Free Damson, Rivers Early.

Fair to poor varieties: Crittenden, Frogmore, Langley Bullace, Mount Logan, Pringle, Scioto, White Damson.